

ANTHRAX

- ◆ ***What is anthrax?*** Anthrax is an acute infectious disease caused by the spore-forming bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*.
- ◆ ***In what form does anthrax come?*** Anthrax spores can be produced in a laboratory setting in a dry form which may be stored and ground into particles.
- ◆ ***How is anthrax transmitted?*** Humans can contract anthrax in three ways:
 - ▲ Through cuts or breaks in the skin resulting from contact with an anthrax infected object, or
 - ▲ From breathing anthrax spores, or
 - ▲ Eating infected meat.
- ◆ ***What are the symptoms of anthrax?*** Symptoms of anthrax vary depending on how the disease was contracted.
 - ▲ ***Cutaneous:*** Most anthrax infections occur when the bacterium enters a cut or abrasion on the skin, such as when handling a contaminated object. Skin infection begins as a raised bump that resembles an insect bite but within 1-2 days develops into a vesicle and then a painless ulcer, usually 1-3 cm in diameter, with a characteristic black necrotic (dying) area in the center. Lymph glands in the adjacent area may swell. About 20% of untreated cases of cutaneous anthrax will result in death. Deaths are rare with appropriate antimicrobial therapy.
 - ▲ ***Inhalation:*** Initial symptoms may resemble a common cold. After several days, the symptoms may progress to severe breathing problems and shock. Inhalation anthrax usually results in death in 1-2 days after onset of the acute symptoms.
- ◆ ***How soon after infection do symptoms occur?*** The incubation period is usually within seven days.
- ◆ ***What is the treatment for anthrax?*** Penicillin is the drug of choice, but tetracycline, erythromycin or chloramphenicol may also be prescribed.